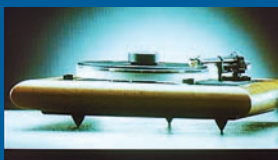
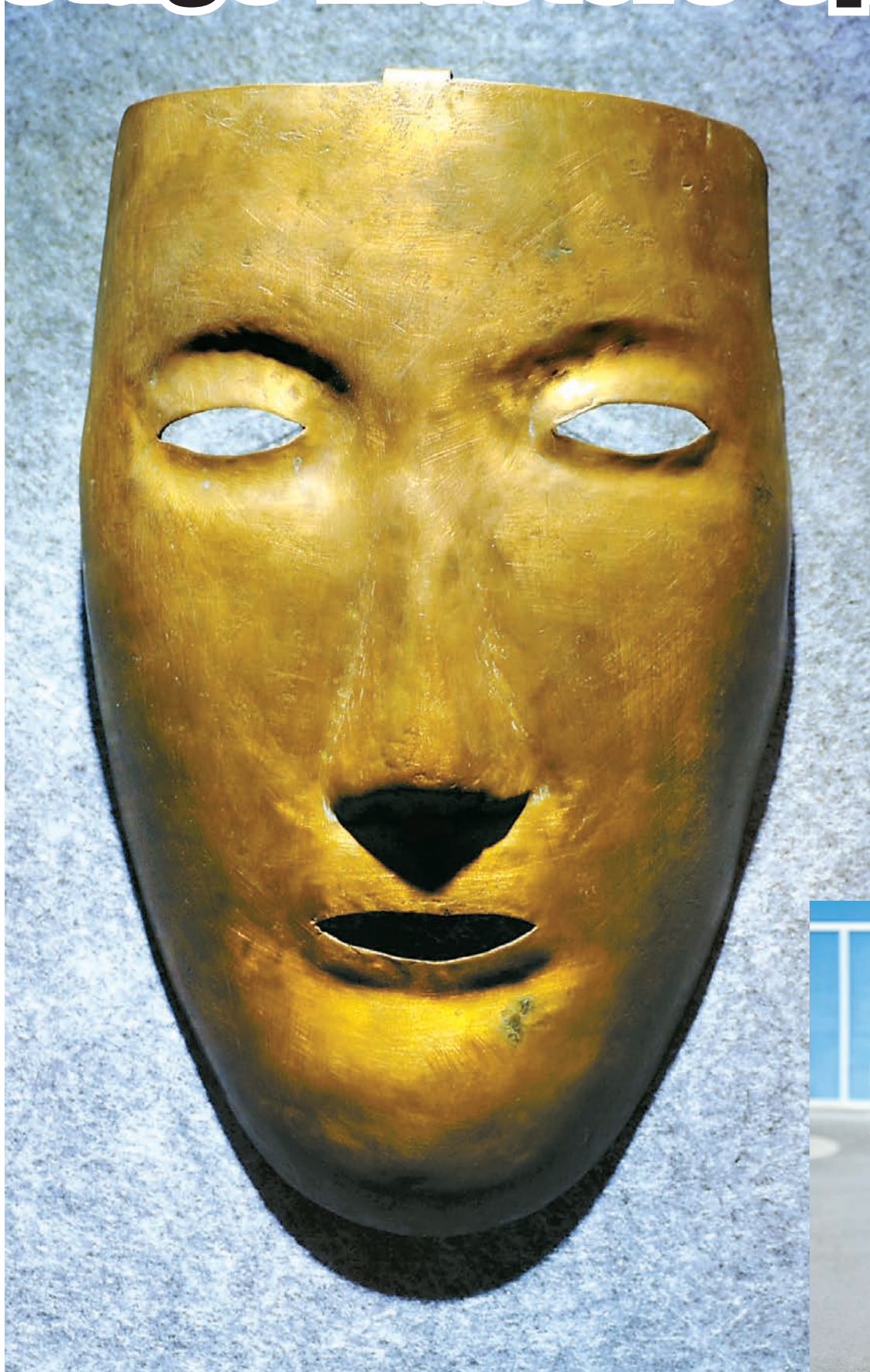


Gifts for those
who have it all
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Stage masters speak



Managers from more than 40 theater groups in 18 provinces and cities met with their international peers in Beijing last Sunday for one of the world's largest theater management workshops.

Attended by such prestigious groups as the Yale School of Drama and the Pricing Institute, the experts discussed ways to boost efficiency, combat falling revenues and solve other problems plaguing the performing arts industry.

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Energy space

Boris Nieslony is creating new connections between viewers and performers.

Gloomy forecast for Euro business

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Apps the center of taxi optimization

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Enjoy the summer of homebrew

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European companies face tumbling profits in China

By Zhao Hongyi

European companies in China are seeing falling profits and rising pressure in the business environment, according to a survey by the European Chamber of Commerce in China.

But most of the companies still see China as a major market for their products and say they are intent on expanding their business.

Most of the European companies have slashed their projected profits, hoping fair competition and legal system will help them to turn around.

European Business in China Business Confidence Survey 2013 was released March 30 by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China and Roland Berger Strategy Consultants.

This year's survey was based on interviews with more than 700 member companies about performance, planning and challenges.

The poor market is largely the result of an economic shift in China and a pessimistic outlook on the world economy, the survey said.

Some 64 percent of the companies reported tumbling revenue and only 44 percent said they were profiting in the China market, down from 73 and 64 percent last year.

Increasing labor cost is one of the main causes of



European businesses are struggling in China, according to a new survey. Xinhua Photos



Davide Cucino, president, European Chamber of Commerce

the collapse in profits. An unfair business environment may also be to blame.

Specifically, transportation, logistics, IT telecommunications, petro-chemicals, automobiles and finance have

all taken a hit, and the two-year forecast is pessimistic.

Pharmaceuticals, retail, food and beverage industries are comparatively optimistic about their future, with 40 percent projecting profitabil-

ity during the same period.

Though facing tough pressure, the China market is still a prominent revenue source for most European companies.

As many as half said China accounts for a tenth of their worldwide revenue, and 71 percent were optimistic about the market in the long term.

Another 86 percent promised to ramp up investments in China to consolidate their market position. Many see potential in the promise of further market reforms by new Chinese leaders.

More than 40 percent of the companies were considering acquisition to strengthen their market posi-

tions in China, and 52 percent said they would begin expanding to the less developed western interior.

Law was the top concern among European companies surveyed. Nearly three fourths said the future of Chinese prosperity depended on building a working legal system.

Nearly half of the European companies said they doubted the government's promise of fair market access.

Talent shortage, rising labor costs, high staff turnover and long training periods were other difficulties the companies faced.

"It's worth mentioning the ongoing need for market economy reforms," said Davide Cucino, president of the chamber. "Half of our companies are not sure whether or not the new Chinese government will continue its reforms."

"[We need] prompt action to ease the pressure of rising labor costs and to liberate the market," he said.

"The increasing cost of labor needs to coincide with an increase in productivity if these companies are to change their pessimistic outlook," said Charles-Edouard Bouée, president of Roland Berger.

The annual survey began in 2004. Each year, it highlights patterns and examines the effects of government policy and global economic trends.

French certification testing comes to Beijing

By Liu Xiaochen

The capital's French speakers have a new way to prove their language skills without costly certification trips abroad.

Last Thursday, the French Embassy announced plans to bring its Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française and Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française, or DELF and DALF, to China.

The certifications were created by the French Ministry of Education in May 1985, and the gold standard test for speakers of French as a

second language.

After the negotiations between the French Embassy, the International Center for French Studies, the Chinese Ministry of Education and the National Education Authority, the group decided the Beijing French Alliance and French Alliance of China would be empowered to administer the tests.

The DELF and DALF tests will be held at locations managed by the National Education Examinations Authority. Beijing French

Alliance's partner academies will be the first choice, with other academies joining later on.

Students learning French in high school and university at the Beijing French Alliance and other language schools can take the test to certify their French ability.

Students can register for the tests online using the National Education Examinations Authority's website. Online payment is still being developed.

The registration fees range from 1,500 to 2,000 yuan

according to test level. All test questions will be approved by the International Center for French Studies.

The DELF and DALF certificate system includes six certificates of different language levels. They can be acquired in any country where the tests are available, and there is no time limit. Each level will test students' comprehension, writing, oral comprehension and oral expression.

Students who reach level B2 will be exempted from language tests when enrolling in

French universities. This level can also contribute to academic assessment for studying in France, and as the French university students' register curriculum.

The certificate is also be widely accepted by many enterprises to confirm employees' ability. In a bilingual working environment, the certificate can be an important advantage.

The first DELF and DALF tests will be conducted at the examination center of Beijing Language and Culture University on June 15.

Emerging taxi apps

By Bao Chengrong

Hailing a taxi in Beijing during rush hour doesn't have to be an exercise in futility.

Popular taxi apps like Didi Taxi and Kuaidi Taxi allow passengers to get in touch with hundreds of available drivers at the same time. Users can input voice messages about their locations, destinations and extra fares they are willing to pay. Drivers who accept the calls are likely to pick them up within a few minutes.



Most domestic taxi apps were just released last year, but they soon occupied the market and won the heart of passengers and taxi drivers alike. Didi Taxi is used in nearly a fifth of Beijing's 66,000 taxis. More than 10,000 calls are placed on Didi every day.

The rapid development has caused problems, however. Developers were forced to suspend app services in Shenzhen recently, and transport authorities in Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan forced them to cancel the premium function. But the toughest aspect is finding a profitable model.

The popularity of taxi apps is thanks to taxi drivers – not passengers. Yaoyao Taxi, a pioneer of this field, once organized its own vehicle groups in order to bring a good user experience. But since it didn't pay attention to taxi drivers, Yaoyao achieved merely 30 percent success rate in the early period.

The case taught developers to take drivers' interests into consideration.

Last December, cabbie Zhang Lei accepted his colleague's suggestion to download a Didi Taxi app through an Android App market. He was amazed to see how his earnings doubled.

Apart from gas bills and the money paid to the Taxi Company, Zhang used to get a mere 5,000 yuan per month. But the Didi Taxi has helped him to earn about 9,000 to 10,000 yuan per month. Zhang said many of his colleagues use the app.

In the past, Zhang took no more than 20 people a day. Usually, he had to run an empty taxi for 30 kilometers. During rush hour, he would rather rest than take a passenger to business centers like Sanlitun or Guomao.

"I would end up losing money if I took a passenger into a traffic jam," Zhang said.

Now, passengers are willing to pay him 5 yuan to 20 yuan extra during rush hour or in bad weather. Zhang said he earns 30 yuan from that per day.

The phone booking service



Didi Taxi, the largest domestic taxi app



A taxi driver uses Didi Taxi app.

is managed by taxi companies and dispatch centers. Therefore, a taxi driver can only get 1 yuan out of the 3 yuan service fees from a passenger.

Sensing the potential market, Beijing carried out an official platform for taxi booking services this month

and called the taxi apps to stop their premium services.

But the new platform doesn't seem to be attractive. In the first three days, the success rate of orders was around 49 percent, much lower than the 98.5 percent of Didi Taxi.

A regulation requiring

Hailing a taxi with apps

CFP Photos

that cabbies not take extra fare may not be a big deal for taxi app developers. Zhao Dong, operation manager of Kuaidi Taxi, said fewer than 20 percent of orders involve extra fares.

Zhuo Ran, operation manager of Didi Taxi, said fewer than 25 percent of the orders involve extra fares. "What the drivers are concerned most about is not how much extra money they'll get, but efficiency," Zhuo said.

Didi Taxi, which hit the market last September, has surpassed its competitors to be the largest domestic taxi app. The app showed its charm on a snowy night last November. Since then, Didi Taxi has caught on. Within four months, it attracted 5,000 taxis and more than 100,000 passengers. The number of orders exceeded 35,000 last December.

Yet it has not found a way to make money. Didi used to charge its users, but soon gave up on that idea.

"If we charge money in the early period, it would inter-

rupt the entire development of our app," Zhuo said. "The number of users would not continue to grow rapidly. The charging model is calling for Didi to achieve a higher level of service, so we won't consider it in the short term."

Some venture capitalists said they were worried that without a good profit model, the taxi apps would not go very far.

But developers still see hope.

Internet giants stand behind them. Didi Taxi received a new round of investment from Tencent and cooperation with Qunar.com. Alipay cooperated with Kuaidi Taxi to provide a mobile payment platform. Baidu also supported taxi apps with LBS open location service and mapping service.

"Behind every call is an order. And every order is valuable. Based on those orders, we can produce the route data. Earning money is just a problem of time," said Zhang Weijian, CEO of Yaoyao Taxi.

World's masters swap theater management



By Liu Xiaochen

Fifteen scholars and experts from around the world met in Beijing on Sunday for four days of lectures and discussions about theater operation and management.

The China Collaboration Innovation Center for Theater Arts Management, created by the China Collaboration Innovation Center for Theater Arts Management, sought the best theater experts from the

US, Germany, Russia, Britain, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland, Austria, South Korea, Poland and Hong Kong.

Among the prestigious groups present were the Yale School of Drama, the Pricing Institute, NFA International Arts and Culture, Lensoviet Academic Theater and the National Theater of Spain.

Managers from more than 40 theater groups in 18 provinces and cities also attended the event.

As an organizer of the workshop, dean of the Central Academy of Drama Xu Xiang said he hoped to learn from other leaders and connect the world's renowned drama managers to their Chinese peers.

Topics under discussion include training, personnel, financing, market operation, pricing strategies, audience, government (foundations), theater groups, current management conditions and theater culture.



Joan Channick



Roger McCann



Ulrika Holmgaard



Chen Ke

Yale's theater training

Joan Channick, associate dean of the Yale School of Drama

Theaters in our country are still trying to find ways to scale down and reduce the cost of performances.

Theaters have started cutting cast sizes to reduce production costs. Currently, there are few government policies designed to support the performing arts. We are always looking for new ways to expose more people to high-quality drama.

A shift in our economic situation has resulted in more theaters opening. Although most are small, they are very professional.

Small theaters often cooperate with non-profit theaters. They can work together on their repertoire and share some of the costs involved in hiring actors and theater managers.

Commercial and non-profit theaters have a better chance to stay afloat when they work together. But there is a good chance that such collaborations will reduce the diversity of drama.

We enroll 65 students each year in our school. They all have a clear focus, such as directing or stage management. The average age of our students is 27, and we tend to prefer older students for studies in management. About 15 percent are from abroad.

The program is three years, with the first year focusing on a short study of professional theory. The last two years focus on occupational development, ensuring students leave the school with the practical skills and experience needed for their future occupation.

Theater management in the UK

Roger McCann, director of NFA International Arts and Culture

In UK theaters, especially in London, most productions are joint productions. Rehearsals are where we bring the actors and music together, and we have people in charge of selling tickets and promoting the shows.

In England, more than half of a theater's income comes from box office sales, 40 percent from commission, 9 percent from donations and only 1 percent from other sources.

Most use the lion's share of this to produce art projects, with 19 percent going to promotion, 6 percent to education and training and 5 percent to financing.

I think our financing situation is on a smaller scale than the US because our theaters have more limits. We may start relying on more individual donations.

All this money is used to guarantee the quality of each performance, pay the promoters, pay actor and employee wages, and then the theater's rental fees.

There are 49 theaters on the west end, and most are close together. Among them are both state-supported and commercial theaters. Those enjoying government support usually set the trend in art development.

In the past decade, most of the theaters that won an Laurence Olivier Award were state supported. In some ways, the award helps to recognize important plays.

One of our most frequent discussions is about ways to find bigger success. We need to persuade our congress, local government and local business to support us. We also need to touch more viewers with our work.

Technology in art

Ulrika Holmgaard, CEO of Swedish Performing Arts

I create international works but am most active in my own country. Theater creators have moved into a new era. We are not limited to theater and drama, but

can be involved in many kinds of activities. I think it is proper to refer to it as the "performing arts."

At present, several government departments are pressuring our committee to discuss ways to make art more digital. Our members have done a lot of research, and hope the government can support their efforts to promote access.

For example, the audience can also get involved by raising issues and making contributions. On the Internet we can say that we are going to make a show and ask if someone wants to help us raise funds.

We do less work with newspapers and magazines, but are preferring blogs for comments. It's also a way to communicate with politicians and organizations. Of course, the audience is limited. We're trying to retool this to reach more people through Twitter and Facebook.

Theater management in China

Chen Ke, vice dean of the Department of Theater Management at the Central Academy of Drama

As the first college to teach theater management, the Central Academy of Drama has divided its curriculum into three periods, including creative planning, producing and managing, and promotion and marketing.

These parts are the core of theater management in our college, and have been at the center of our undergraduate curriculum since 2012.

Our main weakness is that our experience and data are limited. We hope that the center will help us to establish a long-term mechanism to communicate and improve our foundation.

In the next year, we plan to hold classes with basic courses, professional courses, training courses and experimental courses.



agement tips



Photos provided by CCICTAM

Valerii Gradkovskii, manager of Lensoviet Academic Theatre, has an interview after the opening ceremony.

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Boris Nieslony

An 'energy space' for performance art

By Chen Nan

Boris Nieslony hopes to create an "energy space" that connects viewers and performers. He demonstrated at the 2013 Guyu Action International Performance Art Festival, to great results.



Beate Linne

Seeking the universal

Performance art never fails to traffic in psychic violence, provoking questions that viewers, by virtue of their emotional disturbance, feel compelled to answer.

Like a found art collector, Nieslony gathers materials that are already in existence – in his case in Beijing, true stories from people, gadgets placed near performance sites – and arranges them into performances that are eye-opening.

"The basic elements of the piece are that there are several people, a wall and rocks," Nieslony said. "The paradox that I've set up is that neither of us will see the other moving throughout the piece. I keep wondering how the performer's moving, thinking how our movements complement one another and how connected we are as bodies."

In the piece presented in Beijing on June 1 at Paper Tiger Theater, he evokes struggles for freedom with songs including the Internationale. One of the highlights of the performance was dancer Beate Linne, who used a piece of coal to smudge her body black.

Nieslony said she symbolized the freedom of the body.

He's actually explored numerous ways to make body movement create compelling effects.

"The first thing that comes to me is normally something that's happened in my life," he said. "That comes from a background of observing the world through painting, photography and installation. I also think spending time watching a lot of performances has made me visualize my own actions in my down time, which eventually leads to the conception of new pieces."

Normally, he's intrigued by very simple thoughts. For example, he got idea for his Beijing piece from the theater yard. In the following days, when he visited a Chinese performance artist, he couldn't help but be hooked by the large stones that served as installations.

"I find those stones had a lot to do with setting the environment. It controls

where the focus is in the space," he said. "Usually, I visualize a set and then build around that. In performance art you have to visualize where the audience might be, but there will always be unexpected factors added to the mix that are just things you can't plan for."

"My goal is to investigate how performance art can speak to the simplicity and the complexity of an idea."

He added, "Performance art taps into primal or magical thinking, and the audience and performers must challenge themselves to explain basic artistic concepts to those who aren't familiar with it or consider it to those mumbo jumbo."

Forging a group

During his career as a performance

artist, Nieslony has also taken the role of event organizer and researcher. He was co-founder of the Künstlerhaus Hamburg in 1977, and in 1978 of the Kleinen Ausstellungsraum, which was developed as a space to show installation and performance art in Germany.

In 1981 he created numerous live art exhibits. In one, 70 sit around a colossal table and perform day and night.

In 1982, he repeated performance events in the form of 30 days of performance, first on the streets, then in theaters.

Armed with experience and passion, Nieslony's group brings together, people together, ever," he said. "This is powerful. It builds communities and

gives them a point for discussion."

After meeting other international artists such as N. Klassen and Z. Warpechowski, R. Marek, R. Ingold and R. Samens, they created the work group Black Market International, organizing Performance Art events around the world.

The group invited 15 international artists for the performance piece Empedokles in 1993.

"The performers exercise in derision, concentration and effacement," he said. "We regard life seriously while revealing that it is, in fact, worth very little – that it is held in a gesture, that it lasts only a moment. Creating these fundamental moments is our wish."



Photos provided by Goethe-Institut

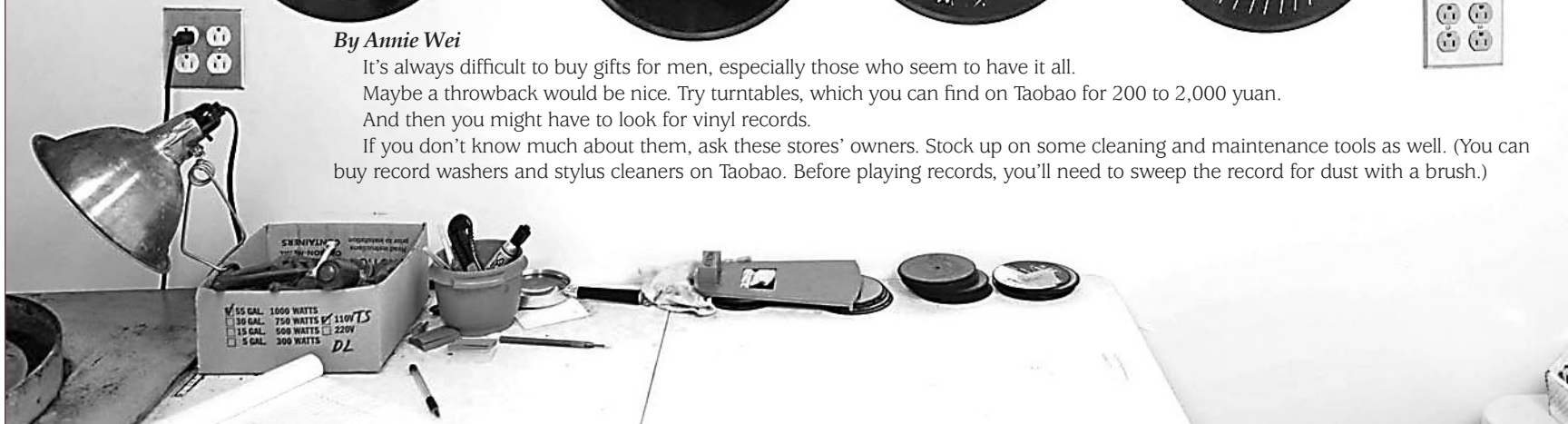
Vinyl records are cool gifts



By Annie Wei

It's always difficult to buy gifts for men, especially those who seem to have it all. Maybe a throwback would be nice. Try turntables, which you can find on Taobao for 200 to 2,000 yuan. And then you might have to look for vinyl records.

If you don't know much about them, ask these stores' owners. Stock up on some cleaning and maintenance tools as well. (You can buy record washers and stylus cleaners on Taobao. Before playing records, you'll need to sweep the record for dust with a brush.)



Some people buy vinyl records for home decor. CFP Photos

Li-Pi Records

This might be the biggest vinyl shop in town, with classic, jazz and rock records in high-fidelity recordings.

Things in its vinyl shop are a bit expensive, but they have some quality stuff.

Website: shop60083805.taobao.com

Where: 798 Art District, near the south gate on the back street behind UCCA, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 13811473825

Strange Fruit in 33

The store used to be a music-themed whiskey bar before it expanded with a huge section of secondhand vinyl last year. The owner, Wang Kai, said he got vinyl from a friend in Guangzhou. If you don't have time to drop by, you can visit its Taobao store.

Where: 33 Yi 33, Qianliang Hutong, Dongsi Bei Dajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 3-8 pm

Indie music

Indie music is more for CD shoppers

with quite a tasteful selection. You can also find some vinyls here, including rock, metal and hip-hop.

Where: 17 Gulou Xi Dajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 1-11 pm

Tel: 6402 2692

Blue Line Records

The store has been in Xijiekou for nearly 20 years. It is considered a place that nurtured many of today's musicians. Although mostly CDs, Blue Line also has an impressive curated selection of vinyl.

Where: 2-26 Xijiekou Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - late

Tel: 8322 2363

Free Sound Music Shop

It has been open in Ping'anli since 2002, with focus on Chinese indie music. It also has some vinyls.

Where: 40 Di'anmen Xi Dajie, Xicheng District

Open: 10 am - 8 pm

Tel: 6613 6182

666 Rock Shop

666 Rock Shop is a metal shop with imported vinyls; some are secondhand.

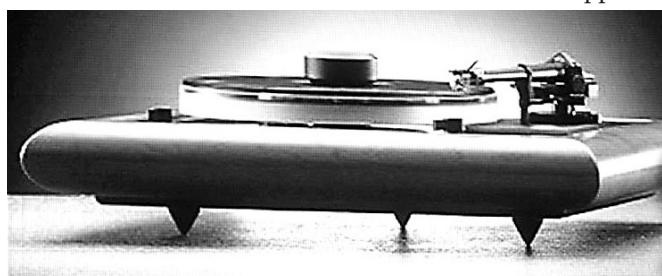
Where: 230-4 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 1-8 pm

Tel: 8403 2435



Deng Zhang, founder of Pest Production, uses his apartment as a vinyl recording production studio.



Quality turntables do not come cheap.

Summer drinks – homebrewed beer and French wines

By Annie Wei

It's the summer of homebrews. For whatever reason, it seems many people are trying to brew their own beer. "It was fun," said Ding Dawei, an artist director, "After you've drunk your own craft beer, most commercial beers at the supermarket don't taste so good."

The homebrew scene took off last year with the establishment of the Beijing Homebrewing Society.

There are nearly a dozen homebrew brands in Beijing, including Topsy Face Microbrewery, Panda Brewpub, Slow Boat Brewery and Jing A.

Although brewing your own beer isn't difficult, *Beijing Today* recommends checking out how it's done at the following places.

"It's like cooking," said Pan Dinghao, owner of Panda Brewpub. "You can cook a Western dish by reading the recipes, but you have no idea what it should taste like."



New breweries opened

Panda Microbrewery's second outlet

This brand's first brewpub, located at Beixinqiao, is only 15 square meters. Its second spot is in the same hutong as Slow Boat Taproom, a quieter neighborhood with more modern decor.

Apart from offering six flavors – wheat, pale ale, black ale, honey ale, IPA and seasonal – it also provides artisan cheese from Le Fromager de Pekin.

Where: 25-1, Dongsiba Tiao (200 meters east of Slow Boat). You can take subway Line 5 to Zhangzizhong Station, get out from the southeast exit, walk south for 300 meters to Dongsiba Tiao. Walk in another 100 meters and you will see the store.

Open: 5 pm – late The first Beijing Beer Geeks Festival

After last year's homebrew festival, the core members of Beijing Homebrewing Society, Yin Hai and his friends, are organizing a beer event.

A few brands are con-

firmed their attendance, including Topsy Face Microbrewery, Panda Brewpub and Slow Boat Brewery. Brands from other cities include Master Gao's from Nanjing, Harvest Craft Brewery and Belgium Craft Brewery from Chengdu. Also, quite a few individuals will bring in their own beers.

Beer samples are 10 yuan, full samples are 30 yuan. One can pre-purchase 150 yuan's worth of tickets for 100 yuan.

Where: 48 Xihai Nanyan, Xicheng District
Open: June 15, 1-9 pm
Jing A Brewery

This brewery supplies beers for Big Smoke, and is run by two men, Kristian Li and Alex Acker.

Their beers are Workers Pale Ale, Mandarin Summer Wheat and Emperor's Brown Ale.

Where: Big Smoke, 1/F, Lee World Building, 57 Xingfucun Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – midnight
Tel: 6416 5195

Homebrewing is easy and fun.

Tasting more at wine exhibition

Many people have bought poor wines before at the supermarket, or wines of disappointing quality compared to their price.

"If the wine price is too low, it cannot be good," said Lu Weili, who runs a wine shop and is taking a wine master course.

But it also has a lot to do with who you purchase your wine from, he said.

The biggest issue for China's wine market is there are too many middle men, he said, and there are people who have convinced media they're a "wine expert" but actually aren't.

People who want to enjoy wine should try to educate themselves. There's no better way to do that than at a wine exhibition, talking to distrib-

utors and wine makers.

Top Wine China, held from June 4 to 6 at China National Conference Center, offered a good opportunity for those interested in wine. It gathered wines from 25 countries and 5,000 brands, and held 16 tasting events.

Fifty winemakers from 12 French regions setup their booths at No. 2 hall. Its wine master tasting course was recommended for mass consumers, teaching about the history of wines from different regions.

If you missed the event, you can still check some of the country's wine associations' Sina Weibo accounts for recommendations.

The French region's Weibo is e.weibo.com/winesoffrance.



CFP Photos